DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 057 328 AC 012 183

AUTHOR	Gough, John S.
TITLE	Interviewing in Twenty-Six Steps.
PUB DATE	Jan 71
NOTE	20p.
AVAILABLE FROM	British Association for Commercial and Industrial Education, 16 Park Crescent, London, W1N 4AP, England (25 pence members, 50 pence non-members)
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS	Age; *Behavior Patterns; *Employment Interviews; Employment Qualifications; *Goal Orientation; Individual Characteristics; *Interviews; Job Applicants; Job Application; *Manuals

ABSTRACT

This booklet outlines an efficient and profitable method of interviewing a candidate for a position in a business firm. The method outlined here depends upon two propositions: (1) Past behavior is the best guide to future performance; and (2) The interviewer is more likely to conduct a search effectively if he has clearly fixed in his mind what it is he is seeking. This search process is divided into four parts: (1) First considerations, which include considering the job and the qualities and qualifications necessary to carry it out; (2) Preparing to interview the candidate, which entails, among other factors, considering the application in the light of the formal qualifications and age required, examining it to make sure there are no unexplained gaps in dates, and arranging to reduce or eliminate interruptions; (3) The interview, which aims at ascertaining the candidate's background and finding out how much he knows about the subjects in which he claims to be interested; and (4) Summing up the candidate, which involves three steps: considering the evidence from the past, adding one's own impressions, and making up one's mind. Two appendices, Preliminary Screening and a Check List, are included. (CK)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

Interv in Twenty-six Steps

ED 072328

by John S. Gough

AA001183

bacie 16 Park Crescent London W1N 4AP

First Impression	May, 1961	5,000 copies
Second Impression	July, 1961	5,000 copies
Third Impression	February, 1963	5,000 copies
Fourth Impression	March, 1965	5,000 copies
Fifth Impression	December, 1966	5,000 copies
Sixth Impression	August, 1968	5,000 copies
Seventh Impression	November, 1969	5,000 copies
Eighth Impression	January, 1971	10,000 copies

Standard Book Number 85171 012 3

Price including postage

25p members

50p non-members

Interviewing
in
Twenty-six Steps

by

JOHN S. GOUGH

Head of Recruitment Section
Central Staff Department
Imperial Chemical Industries Ltd.

BACIE

is indebted to Imperial Chemical Industries Ltd for permission to publish this booklet for general distribution

Published by

BRITISH ASSOCIATION
FOR COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL EDUCATION
16 Park Crescent, London, W1N 4AP
(*Telephone:* 01-636 5351)

Contents

INTRODUCTION 3

FIRST CONSIDERATIONS 4
Steps 1 - 5

PREPARE TO INTERVIEW THE CANDIDATE 6
Steps 6 – 12

THE INTERVIEW 8
Steps 13 – 23

SUMMING UP THE CANDIDATE 13
Steps 24 – 26

SUMMARY 14

Appendix 1: Preliminary Screening 15

Appendix 2: Check List 16

The best any interviewer can hope to achieve is, bit by bit, to reduce the number of times he is wrong. Any short guide to interviewing must appear more dogmatic than the author finds attractive. Almost every statement requires more qualification than space allows. Everyone interviews differently, and this is a good thing because his approach should vary with the individual he is interviewing. This pamphlet aims only to suggest, never to lay down the law: despite all appearances to the contrary.

Introduction

The Task

The task is to choose a person who will be likely to succeed in a certain job or range of jobs. The task is not to choose a 'good person', however this is defined.

The Method

All methods involve forecasting the future. No method can therefore be infallible. Some selectors rely chiefly upon subjective impressions to make the forecast, and sometimes that forecast proves correct.

The method outlined here depends considerably upon two propositions.

The first is that past behaviour is the best guide we have to future performance. For instance, by the early twenties the ambitious or the person with an enquiring mind will have revealed his bent, although probing may be necessary to discover it. If, for example, a man has exerted influence quickly over others in other jobs, or if he has always set himself high standards and achieved them the chances are that he will do so again. Age and experience modify, but do not often seem to change, basic characteristics. The truth of this can be observed by thinking of people with whose work you are familiar in the office or factory.

The second proposition is that you are much more likely to conduct a search effectively—for this is what an interview also involves—if you have clearly fixed in your mind what it is you are seeking.

In this method subjective impressions are not given pride of place, but neither are they ignored—they are checked against what the past record reveals. Subjective impressions by themselves are dangerous, partly because they can be affected easily by the state of the candidate's or interviewer's temporary physical condition. An upset liver can lose a good candidate.

First Considerations

Before you buy material of any kind you consider carefully its purpose and the tolerance you will allow. Human beings are exceedingly expensive. To say there is no time to undertake Steps 1-5 reveals a false sense of values. It also greatly reduces the chances of making a good selection.

Step 1: Consider the Job

Get a clear picture of the nature of the job and concentrate first on its essential features. This means, ruthlessly discard all the side issues. What are the major responsibilities? Are there any special facets which are unusual, e.g., health considerations?

'Get a clear picture of the nature of the job'

Step 2: Consider the experience and formal qualifications required

Is this a job which really requires experience in similar work? How similar? Are academic qualifications relevant? What is the minimum standard?

Step 3: Consider the personal qualities required to carry out the job

The list will probably begin with 'very high intelligence' and include 'the ability to get on with everyone in any circumstances'. Less than 10 per cent of the population possesses the first and for some jobs it is a distinct disadvantage: the second is not all that common and in any case the two qualities are often mutually exclusive. The long list of qualities which first springs to mind has two major disadvantages. Few possess all, and if they had, they would probably not apply for your job. Secondly, it is almost impossible for the interviewer to carry them all in his mind while he is interviewing, and his search becomes too diffuse for full effectiveness.

Step 4: Reduce the basic qualifications to a few, perhaps to no more than four or five

Remember, you are going to look for the *key* qualities which are required in a high degree in the job or jobs for which you are selecting. In choosing the qualities it is wise to avoid those that are too all-embracing and particularly those with a high emotional content. Thus 'leadership' might be replaced by 'the power to persuade others' or 'intelligence' by 'the ability to understand something difficult quickly'. The importance of the choice of these descriptive words depends only upon the clarity with which they are understood by the selectors. In some ways it is better to choose your own words to describe the qualities you are after than to use those provided generally in the text books. Words with as much practical content as possible tend to be the most useful. To look for someone with an 'enquiring mind' may prove easier than to look for someone 'good at research.'

Step 5: Discussion with other selectors

Others are almost certain to be concerned with the selection. Reach agreement with them about the four or five major qualities required and write them down on paper. Agreement in advance saves time because discussions about each candidate after interview can be more readily confined to what is relevant. Also, if the selectors know clearly what they are looking for they are more likely to spot it when it is there and note its absence when it is not. (In some cases this step can profitably precede Step 1.)

7

Prepare to interview the Candidate

To interview without seeing the papers first, in these days of photocopying, is to be inefficient. No excuses are valid.

Step 6: Consider the application in the light of the formal qualifications and age required

A good advertisement is not measured by the number of replies, but by the number of suitable candidates it attracts. If Steps 2 and 3 have been carried out thoroughly, a number of candidates can be dismissed because they lack the basic qualifications or their age is incorrect. Nevertheless, keep one eye open for the exceptional man who departs from the ideal.

Step 7: Consider the application in the light of the qualities required

What does the record reveal upon his life so far, in relation to the major qualities required for this job? If, for instance, a high degree of stamina and persistence is required does the record show that a number of targets have been achieved? What are the standards of performance? Does the record show success in a number of different ventures? What sort of qualities do you think past positions must have required to succeed in them? Are any of them the qualities you are particularly looking for? If the candidate writes his own account of himself in his application, is he clear or diffuse, does he go into far too great detail and thus reveal a lack of proportion or common sense? Most of the conclusions reached at this stage can be only tentative, but they suggest two things:

1. the gaps which must be filled in from the record and
2. some of the lines on which the interview should proceed.

Step 8: Consider the application to find a 'common link' with the candidate

See if there is any link between your own experience, interests, school, military service, etc., and the candidate, as this will provide one method of breaking the ice when the interview begins.

Step 9: Examine the application to make sure there are no unexplained gaps in dates

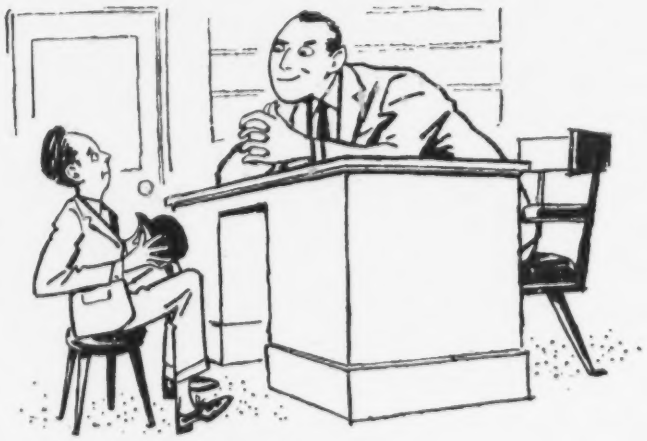
Gaps occur from time to time and to probe them is essential.

Pencil in some good 'opening up' questions. This helps to ensure that you do not forget to ask the question so easily remembered after the candidate has gone. It also helps to prevent waste of time, is a help to nervous interviewers and is an insurance against 'drying-up'.

Step 10: Arrange to reduce or eliminate interruptions

If possible arrange for your telephone calls to be taken elsewhere. An engaged notice upon the door may be desirable.

Step 11: Arrange the seating so that neither interviewer nor candidate is at a disadvantage



'Arrange the seating so that neither interviewer nor candidate is at a disadvantage'

Step 12: Examine your prejudices

If the candidate is to work directly under you and in very close association with you these prejudices may be important. The fact that you like fishing, hate suede shoes, don't believe in Socialism, can't stand rather long hair, may make you judge unfairly someone who takes a different view.

It is a mistake to try to find someone exactly like you.
You won't succeed.

It is a mistake to try to find someone exactly like the past holder of the post.

You won't succeed.

There is no scientific evidence to support the following:

(*a*) *Red hair goes with a quick temper;*

(*b*) *A high forehead signifies high intelligence;*

(*c*) *A firm handshake and square jaw denote a firm character;*

(*d*) *To look you straight in the face is a sign of honesty (the Confidence Man does this very well);*

(*e*) *Agreement with everything you say means that he is a remarkably able person.*

The Interview

The Aims are:

1. To get the facts straight. Get the candidate to fill in the details of his career so far. This does not mean merely repeating what the application form already says, e.g., instead of saying: 'You were the secretary of the blank society, weren't you?' ask 'What was the most difficult part of your work as secretary of the blank society?'

2. To find out how much he knows about the subjects in which he claims to be interested. In particular, see what standards he has attained. An aggressive 'What's the name of the last book you read?' is not so effective as 'Which way do your tastes lie?' It is doubtful if detailed questioning on the kind of subjects on which he has passed public examinations does more than indicate to him that the interviewer is out of date on those subjects. Limit them if used, to questions which reveal if he has a practical outlook or an enquiring mind.

3. To obtain his opinions upon as many matters as possible. Are they well founded? If the interviewer talks most of the time or constantly airs his own views he is unlikely to obtain the candidate's real opinion. A friendly neutrality is the aim here.

4. To judge how quick he is to respond. Is his mind alert?

5. To see what sort of immediate impression he makes upon you. Does this change as he becomes more at ease?

6. To find out his likes and dislikes. What sort of things has he most enjoyed doing, what sort of people has he been at home with? This is most important. It is no good selecting him for a job he won't like doing or for a place of work he will hate.

7. To establish a trend in his achievements, his thinking, his reactions. No one factor is necessarily significant. Several, taken together, can be.

8. To attract the candidate to the job or jobs for which he is a candidate. This is not put last because it is unimportant. It is very important. This aspect, however, is somewhat separate from the purpose of these notes. Without doubt, incompetent interviewing repels and good interviewing may even attract candidates.

The Method is:

To establish at once as relaxed a situation as possible. Steps 13 and 14 can help to achieve this. But don't expect the candidate to relax if you are taut and strung up yourself. You will be helped if you have carried out the earlier steps thoroughly.

Step 13: Make it immediately clear to the candidate where he is to sit, put his coat, etc.

Step 14: Adopt either:

(a) **The 'Common Link' approach** (see Step 8). Start, e.g., with 'I see we were both born in Buckinghamshire. Have your family always lived there . . . ?' or, 'I see you play rugger for the All-blues. I played for them in '06, why did they do so badly against the Bees this year?' or

11 61

(b) **The 'Off balance' approach.** This can only be carried out successfully at the man-to-man interview. Instead of beginning the interview in the more normal manner, the interviewer deliberately starts off by a hurried, almost casual 'how do you do?' and then talks to the candidate about something that has nothing to do with the interview, e.g., he may show the candidate a chart or picture in his room, or say that he has had an interesting enquiry from X. If this is carried out successfully the candidate relaxes because this is not what he was expecting. The interview then begins in a much freer atmosphere; or

(c) A mixture of (a) and (b).

Don't, however, flourish the application form in front of him and solemnly go through it word by word with him.

The 'off balance' approach

Step 15: Stop talking yourself

Having got the candidate going, it should not be necessary to do more than keep him talking on the subjects you want to hear about. An occasional 'Really' is more effective than a recital of your favourite anecdote.

Step 16: Lead into the groups of subjects you want to discuss

These subjects for discussion can be conveniently grouped together. Some people will find it helpful to have the two strips of the check list (*see Appendix* 2) tucked into the two sides of the blotter to make sure that all the ground has been covered. The lists have been purposely designed to allow this.

It is not necessary—indeed, it is often undesirable—to follow a set order. Be opportunist: if the conversation gets on to games, for instance, lead on to other personal interests; if to the shortage of equipment in University laboratories, lead on to conditions of life generally for the student and thence the candidate's part in the social or intellectual life of his University. On the other hand, it is better to follow a set order than to interview without any design at all. To hop from one subject to another without any connecting thread can thoroughly upset the candidate.

Step 17: Avoid asking any questions to which he can answer 'yes' or 'no'

This brings the monosyllabic candidate into the open and tends to conceal your own views.

Thus 'Did you like the Americans?' might be replaced by 'What did you think of the Americans?'

Step 18: Question with a purpose

Apart from the opening civilities, avoid aimless conversation.

Try to work all subjects discussed round to the point where they will help you to assess the four or five qualities you are seeking. For instance, suppose 'an enquiring mind' is one of the key qualities you have decided is needed in a young research graduate, the kind of man you are looking for might

be keen on music *and* study its relationship to mathematics

play soccer or rugger *and* work out in detail the moves on paper

visit the castles in Spain *and* find out how the huge stones were raised on top of each other at that period

read detective novels *and* always try to work out the answer before the end.

It is easy to contrast this type of mind with the one which drifts or takes most things for granted.

Step 19: Get at the truth by indirect questioning

The candidate often thinks he knows what you want him to say. If you say 'Did you like the people with whom you worked in your previous job?' he knows you expect him to say 'Yes'—certainly if he is in for a job where getting on with others easily is important. If you ask him about the quality of management he found, or about the way things were done—or even about the food in the canteen, you will get a more reliable view of what he really thinks.

Again, don't ask him if he 'thinks he will be happy in a large firm'. He will probably say 'Yes'. Make up your own mind on this. Do his past schooling, University, other jobs, throw any light on this ?

Step 20: Follow up his opinions thoroughly

This has to be done gently and not in any way aggressively, but it should be firm nevertheless. It is not difficult, for instance, for a candidate to say he preferred the Germans to the French. He should be asked why. If he says the Germans are more matter-of-fact and the French are 'airy-fairy', he should not be allowed to get away with this without being asked to give illustrations from his own experience or reasons to prove his point.

Following up views in this way enables you to get an idea of his firmness of view, powers of reasoning, quickness of mind.

Step 21: Avoid any tendency to trick the candidate

Trick questions, sudden blunt queries like 'Do you drink?' may help the interviewer's own morale but they prove very little about the candidate. They do reveal the interviewer, however. This is not the object of the exercise. It is as well to remember that you have the following cards in your hand:

(a) Almost certainly you are older, and no doubt therefore wiser

(b) You have a job

(c) You can prepare your questions in advance

(d) The encounter takes place on your own ground

(e) He knows you have the power to accept or reject.

The only card the candidate has is to tell you what you can do with your job! Generally, however, this is not the object of the exercise.

Step 22: Tell the candidate something about the job, the terms and conditions

Some people prefer to start with this, in which case it comes before Step 14. Much time is saved if applicants are given an outline of the job's requirements before the interview. Try hard to be clear and concise, and always ask the candidate if he has questions to ask you.

Step 23: Tell the candidate when he may expect to have the answer to his application

Be clear about this: carry out your undertaking.

Summing up the Candidate

Step 24: Consider the evidence from the past only as pointers towards the possession of, or lack of, the key qualities you are seeking

Step 25: Add your own impressions

Now bring to bear your own observations from the interview—your hunches, your impressions, the subjective impact of the candidate. Do they seem to be in line with the evidence? If they are at variance with it, reflect and then reflect again. Particularly if you find yourself saying 'I don't think much of his personality' go back and check the facts again. Has his personality, outside the inevitably unreal atmosphere of the interview room, been a handicap or advantage to him? Has he influenced and persuaded people—been elected to office against stern competition? If so, think once again.

Step 26: Make up your mind

No help available for this painful process.

Summary

Step 1: Consider the job.

Step 2: Consider the experience and formal qualifications required.

Step 3: Consider the personal qualities required to carry out the job.

Step 4: Reduce the basic qualifications to a few, perhaps to no more than four or five.

Step 5: Discussion with other selectors.

Step 6: Consider the application in the light of the formal qualifications and age required.

Step 7: Consider the application in the light of the qualities required.

Step 8: Consider the application to find a 'common link' with the candidate.

Step 9: Examine the application to make sure there are no unexplained gaps in dates.

Step 10: Arrange to reduce or eliminate interruptions.

Step 11: Arrange the seating so that neither interviewer nor candidate is at a disadvantage.

Step 12: Examine your prejudices.

Step 13: Make it immediately clear to the candidate where he is to sit, put his coat, etc.

Step 14: Adopt either the 'Common Link' approach, the 'Off Balance' approach or a mixture of both.

Step 15: Stop talking yourself.

Step 16: Lead into the groups of subjects you want to discuss.

Step 17: Avoid asking any questions to which he can answer 'yes' or 'no'.

Step 18: Question with a purpose.

Step 19: Get at the truth by indirect questioning.

Step 20: Follow up his opinions thoroughly.

Step 21: Avoid any tendency to trick the candidate.

Step 22: Tell the candidate something about the job, the terms and conditions.

Step 23: Tell the candidate when he may expect to have the answer to his application.

Step 24: Consider the evidence from the past only as pointers towards the possession of, or lack of, the key qualities you are seeking.

Step 25: Add your own impressions.

Step 26: Make up your mind.

Appendix 1: Preliminary Screening

The short first interview

When a large number of candidates have to be seen in a short period, as in the preliminary screening required under present conditions at the Universities, it is clearly impossible to follow all the steps described above. The main principles remain the same.

The interviews differ, however, in two main respects:

1. Candidates are being considered for a range of jobs

Be even more ruthless in reducing the essential qualifications to a maximum of three or four for each range of jobs. For example, in selecting chemists, there are generally the following main streams to consider: Research proper: Production: Technical Service. Most people will find that at least two of the essential qualities will apply to all three, but that each of them has, in addition, a special emphasis. For instance, Production requires special ability to control a variety of people effectively. Research puts emphasis on sustained analytical thought: Technical Service requires the ability to be acceptable immediately to a changing group of people.

2. Only a very short interview is possible in the time

This being the case, there are five main aids:

(1) Cut down the time spent on the obvious winner and the obvious dud and concentrate on the middle range. This can only be done within rather narrow limits for fear of damaging public relations. Sometimes, because of a closely timed schedule, it cannot be done at all. Even a minute or two saved on these two extremes means more time for the others.

(2) Talk less than ever yourself—except in so far as this is necessary to 'sell' the firm and make the candidate at ease.

(3) Concentrate your attention on one of the essentials from the beginning. As soon as the possession of one of them is clearly shown, go hard for the next one. Similarly, as soon as the absence of one of the important qualities becomes clear, spend as little further time as possible on the candidate.

(4) Don't spend time finding out why the candidate wants to come to your sort of job. This of course is vitally important, but leave it for the final interview. Assume he wants to come.

(5) Be particularly careful not to waste time on matters that can be taken for granted; e.g., if he has been playing rugger and cricket in various teams don't waste time on games as such. If he has a diploma in French speaking, don't try to discover how well he speaks the language.

Appendix 2: Check List

(This can be cut in half and tucked in either side of a desk blotter)

PHYSICAL
General appearance
Manners and clothes
Voice and speech
Confidence:
over-confidence or
undue nervousness?
Speed of reactions

FAMILY AND HOME
What kind of influence?

SCHOOL
Age/'O' and 'A' levels
Prizes or Bursaries
School offices held
School societies: offices held
Games: standard achieved
Other activities
Side of school enjoyed most

FURTHER EDUCATION
Degree, diploma, certificate:
standard achieved
Distinctions or prizes

NATIONAL SERVICE
Rank achieved
Value to individual

UNIVERSITY LIFE (Non-academic)
Societies and clubs: offices held
Games: standard achieved
Other activities

OTHER JOBS
Skills or experience needed
Responsibility for others
Reason for leaving

PERSONAL INTERESTS (Intellectual)
Reading: Cinema
Music: Theatre: Radio
TV: Painting
Standard achieved

PERSONAL INTERESTS (Social)
Social service
Clubs
Politics
Local affairs
Societies

PERSONAL INTERESTS (Others)
Gardening and Handicrafts
Motoring
Photography
Country pursuits
Games
Standard achieved

GENERALLY
What sort of things does he like doing?
What sort of things has he done well?
Is he happiest using his brain or doing practical things?
Where does he want to live, or doesn't he mind?
When is he available?

Selected titles of BACIE Publications

A Guide to the Writing of Business Letters

A Guide to the Use of the Telephone in Business

Report Writing

Hours into Minutes

Tips on Talking

Lecturing to Large Groups

Interviewing in Twenty-Six Steps

Welcome Stranger

A Guide to the Use of Visual Aids

A Guide to the Overhead Projector

A Guide to the 8mm Loop Film

Multi-Purpose ETV on a Budget

Mathematics by Visual Aids

BACIE Case Studies

Three Case Studies in Management and Supervisory Training

Industrial Training Boards; Progress Report No 5

Books for Training Officers

BACIE Register of Programmed Instruction

BACIE Bibliography Vol I; Vol II; and combined Vols I to III

A Training Officer's Guide to the Education System of Great Britain

A Training Officer's Guide to Selection

A Guide to the Training of Office Supervisors

A Training Officer's Guide to Discussion Leading

A Guide to Job Analysis

Manpower for Engineering and Technology

The Changing Pattern of Technical and Higher Education

BACIE Journal published quarterly.
Available on subscription.

BACIE News published seven times a year.
For members only.

Further details of all BACIE Publications together with prices are available from:

Publications Department,
BACIE, 16 Park Crescent, London W1N 4AP. Tel: 01-636 5351

ERIC Clearinghouse
JAN 18 1972
on Adult Education

BRITISH ASSOCIATION FOR COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL EDUCATION

Patron: HRH THE DUKE OF EDINBURGH, KG, KT, OM
Chairman: C. R. ENGLISH
Hon. Treasurer: L. S. NEWTON
Director: P. J. C. PERRY, OBE

BACIE was founded in 1919 and is registered as an educational charity. It is the only voluntary organisation specialising in all aspects of commercial and industrial education and training in the United Kingdom. The Association's membership includes industrial and commercial firms, the nationalised industries, Government departments, industrial training boards, local education authorities, universities, technical and commercial colleges, professional bodies, trade associations and trade unions, as well as numerous members overseas.

SERVICES TO MEMBERS

1. **BACIE Journal** issued quarterly. An authoritative guide to training practice and policy.
2. **BACIE News** published seven times a year. A concise summary of current events.
3. **BACIE Bibliography** of publications in the field of education and training in industry, published as a supplement to the **News.** The only service of its kind—essential to all who want to keep abreast of what is published in this rapidly growing field.
4. **BACIE Training Aids Index**—a constantly updated service for all who need to buy and use audio-visual aids in the course of their work.
5. **Occasional Publications,** handbooks, training manuals and reports.
6. **Information Department** gives advice to members on all aspects of education and training in commerce and industry; provides library and loan services.
7. **Courses** specially designed for education and training officers and others working in the field of further education.
8. **Conferences and Exhibitions,** both national and regional, on subjects of common interest.
9. **Ten Regional Groups and Scottish Branch.**

Membership details will gladly be supplied on application to the Secretary

Printed for the Publishers, The British Association for Commercial and Industrial Education
16 Park Crescent, London, W1N 4AP, by Frank Juckes Ltd.
Stratford Street North, Birmingham B11 1BY